

***Apostle Town (Craig)**

In *Apostle Town*, the title of the work does something interesting to the poem by making it sound as if it were an elegy for an Apostle, but the 'Town' at the end makes that much more ambiguous; the apostle could just be a reference as a metaphor to any person that was good and served to keep people together. I am leaning more towards the second of the two as the strongest reference in the poem is to an old, gap-toothed woman that used to be beautiful. This means that the woman was aesthetically charming in her prime and grew, grievously, to something ragged and worn. However, this is strange as it seems a rather shallow observation on the part of the narrator in that the grief inspired by the death of this great person is compared to something as seemingly irrelevant of the passage of beauty into, for lack of a better word, ugliness. It is interesting to note, as well, the inevitability of this passage with time (and thus age) as the death of an Apostle is just as eminent as the death of any other mortal. One thing that strikes me as curious, though, is the strong reference to gap-toothedness. In 14th century English literature, a gap toothed woman was associated with promiscuousness, and as she is old and her body dilapidated, the reference is likely made to the time of her youth- when she was beautiful. So the passage of physical beauty with age is parallel to the passage of sinful promiscuity into forced abstinence (for most). I only draw on the 'sin' reference because the title of the poem invokes a biblical reference. The fact that the wind blew all around making it difficult to communicate to one another suggests that this person was the glue to multiple relationships, as in between the two people that failed to speak on the roadside due to the wind. Their existence facilitated communication in a group as the Apostles facilitated communication to and from Jesus from the masses. This could easily be the mother in a family- the one that keeps everyone cooperating and functioning like Big Mama in the movie *Soul Food*. Sorry for that analogy, but it seems to be a character that everyone can relate to in some way. Also, it is interesting that the verbs are in the past tense, i.e. "The wind blew every day." This suggests that the hard part was over; the wind stopped blowing. This is another thing that comes with the passage of time; the progression of grieving to accepting loss, and finally, to the reestablishment of every day life. Every day.

Amendments:

Apostle town (tom)

I can see the view that this could be an elegy for an apostle. Yet I think the apostle term is highly symbolic and I think it may have something to do with the transition from the age of apostles to the age of popes and bishops form a free roving band of rag-tag preachers to an organized, religious system. It's sort of like an ageing of the church, really the whole of the poem seems to deal with ageing more than anything else. This is seen almost in every line for example space, travel, blowing wind an old woman all deal with passing of time in one for or another. I think this is what Craig was getting at with the noticing the use of past tense in the poem.

Apostle Town (abby)

In "Apostle Town," the only major thing missed was the pilgrimage allusions. It was almost touched on, where Craig says the past tense suggests that the hard part is over, but from the poem we can see how this is due to some journey, probably a pilgrimage,

because the title DOES make it necessary to tie this to the religious connotations of Jesus and the Apostles. The idea of travel is especially highlighted in the lines "We went./ Shouting sideways at one another./ Along the road it was useless." This makes it seem like a joint journey on FOOT and the person who died in the first line may not have made the entire pilgrimage.

Apostle Town (Allison)

I guess the main thing I wish had been in this analysis was would be that the death may not be the Apostle at all. I almost took the death as that of "you," the old woman because of the line, "Of an old woman you." I agree that this is the strongest reference in the poem, but I think there should have been more focus on the title, "Apostle Town." There were only twelve Apostles that Jesus had chosen, which makes them different than other religious figures-- saints, priests, disciples etc. When I googled the term Apostle, a site came up in big letters saying "ONE IN TWELVE," which is interesting because I just read an essay by Tillie Olsen about how one out of twelve writers are women during this century. Maybe I am reading WAY too far into things and am crazy, but I just thought the reference to an old woman at the end seemed cooler after that.

Apostle Town (casey)

I thought Craig was on the right track as the you addressed in the poem as being Jesus, and the capped tooth woman, as the analysis pointed out gapped tooth is a reference to promiscuity, making the woman mentioned in the poem Mary Magdalene. The comment on beauty coming from an apostle (assuming that the speaker is either an apostle or of some sort of relation), that it is referencing the beauty that she exuded when in the presence of Jesus, and that her now faded state, like the wind that prevents communication, and the black gaps that fill the spaces. I think that the road should have been investigated more. Where does it come from, where does it lead? I wish that I knew if this were a specific reference of some kind, or is just an allusion to the road of life.

Apostle Town: (courtney) Looking up gap-toothedness was a smart move, as was using a reference to "Big Momma" from Soul Food—although keep in mind that not everyone has seen this movie. One thing that should have been done was looking up the definition of apostle. In the dictionary I used, the definition is "one who pioneers a movement or belief (after the religious definitions of the 12 apostles of Christ, of course). If the woman who has grown old is holding people together, how is she an apostle? Had she started something that all of those people share as a common tie? The poem could, in another sense, be referring to the Catholic church, and the schism it experienced a few centuries after the deaths of the apostles—who were not there to hold the church together and communicate the church's true beliefs.

Apostle Town. (marina)

I suppose I am just going to dive right into what I think was missed. First of all, I think that the death being referred to is not that of an apostle, but rather death of Jesus. Another thing that was not noticed is, in my humble opinion, the constant juxtaposition between the solid and the invisible, even though even that which is solid in this poem is usually somewhat ephemeral. The one and only un-abstract thing seems to be the woman, and because the sentence structure is so strange - "the old woman you", I am bound to take

the line in two different directions. One being what is discussed in Craig's analysis, the other being a suggestion that perhaps, the you used to be beautiful and turned into that old woman (one can be reminiscent about knowing their past self). The old woman could also obviously stand for time withering away.

Apostle Town (martin)

Apostle being a reference to anyone that was good is ambiguous. Being "good" varies as an idea from person to person, and Carson would be aware of this. I'd agree with the sentence in the analysis if "good" was just cut out and "served to keep people together" carried that statement. The observation on the irrelevancy of the passing of beauty into ugliness may not be shallow. It may point more toward how the real beauty in the woman, if she ever had any, didn't pass with her looks, so the aesthetics are irrelevant. That's not so shallow. Big Mama in Soul Food?!?! I like it. I agree with your observations on the subject of sin. Carson's introduced a biblical read from the title of the poem, so that perspective is perfectly valid. Carson likes to place her reader in a state, then present philosophies like you've been stating in this analysis. That "every day" line is very important. The poet really sets it apart and the repetition of it "every day" just sounds desperate and painful. I'd like to see a mention of how Carson breaks apart her lines in this poem. She breaks lines in weird places a lot, but in this poem it is obviously quite deliberate. The lines could stand alone as their own statements, which explains the end punctuation, but a reader can naturally read it as a sentence until the clause finishes. Which read makes the poem sound more like loss?

Apostle Town Amendment: (matt)

I think it's interesting that you spend so much time on the old gap-toothed woman; you seem so focused on that as the heart of the poem that you spend little time on anything else. The way I break the lines, the entire reference to the woman is one long analogy to explain the "gaps" between "Us." I am much more drawn to the "us" versus "you" going on in the poem than the old woman. After all, it begins with "After your death" and with the title "Apostle Town" I immediately think of the you as being Christ and the "us" as being the Apostles. And the action seems to be describing a falling out among the "us" now that the "you" is gone. This doesn't quite jive with my knowledge of Biblical history and so I view the Apostle reference as being more of an analogy to the relationship between the "you" and the "us" rather than a literal description. The Apostles can't carry on now that their leader is gone and instead they bicker among themselves and gaps develop between them.

Apostle Town (mike)

I thought Craig was on the right track as the you addressed in the poem as being Jesus, and the capped tooth woman, as the analysis pointed out gapped tooth is a reference to promiscuity, making the woman mentioned in the poem Mary Magdalene. The comment on beauty coming from an apostle (assuming that the speaker is either an apostle or of some sort of relation), that it is referencing the beauty that she exuded when in the presence of Jesus, and that her now faded state, like the wind that prevents communication, and the black gaps that fill the spaces. I think that the road should have been investigated more. Where does it come from, where does it lead? I wish that I knew if this were a specific reference of some kind, or is just an allusion to the road of life.

Apostle Town (monte)

It is interesting that the 'gapped toothed woman' would be as you said, "was the glue to multiple relationships," and later you describe her as a mother figure. Yet I believe you when you say that the gapped toothedness is a reference to promiscuity. I am not saying that your interpretation is incorrect, but just noting that it is strange that a promiscuous woman would be a motherly figure. Also, you never really addressed the last line beyond that she was beautiful. I say that I don't understand it either. One thing I did notice that seemed left out is the common reference to 'space' and 'gaps' and many placement words like "sideways, along, between, and around." These words in conjunction with the theme of death only amplifies the idea of this person being a very important figure in someone's life (or relationship) and then their death caused disruption.

Apostle Town (tiffany)

I think that Craig is right on with the poems allusions to death, the destruction of communication (a product of the wind blowing and distorting voices), and the passage of time. The death suggests a kind of dismantling of a system; it's substantial and throws things off-kilter. I agree that the person who passed was "the glue to multiple relationships" and that "the Apostles facilitated communication to and from Jesus from the masses". And the timeline assumption is justified in the sense that the speaker of the poem, in utilizing the past tense, makes this death seem like something he/she is reflecting upon.

Where he and I differ in interpretation are in who has passed and what the old woman is representative of. In reading "Apostle Town", my first assumption was that this was a town that the apostles of Jesus existed. In believing such, I took the speaker of the poem to be one of the apostles (or many a representative of the collective group) who was speaking to the deceased. The person who passed I assumed was Jesus because he was the individual who held this group of people together, a leader. When a leader resigns or dies, you're left with a group of followers and no real idea of how a possible succession would manifest itself. Thus, the passing is turbulent. "Every day. / Opposed us like a wall. / We went. / Shouting sideways at one another." These lines express an exasperation to me, that each day was hard to deal with without someone to guide the apostles. "Shouting sideways at each other" came across as having differences of opinion. The "empty spaces" seemed to denote the emptiness from Jesus' passing. Yet them being "solid" and "black" continues the allusion to the wall built between brothers who were once close. I think that the "old woman" is representative of this progression from a time when everything was fresh, and beautiful, and ordered to a time when the foundations crumble and death comes into the picture. The situation withered and grew old and eventually met its demise much as beauty does the same.